

In April I attended the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism's 2007 Consultation on Conscience public policy conference. The primary focus of the conference includes a discussion of issues of importance to the Reform Jewish community.

I was privileged to be given the opportunity to address the conference on one of the most important issue social issues facing America today: Hate crimes.

The conflict in Kosovo in the late 1990s illustrates the ever-present threat of ethnic hate. While serving in the Navy, I witnessed the first concentration camp in Europe since World War II. We all know what happens when a society allows one group to stigmatize and violently attack another.

But hate is not limited by international borders.

In 2005, the FBI recorded more than 7,000 hate crimes in the United States. Under the Hate Crime Statistics Act, the FBI annually records hate crime incidents around the nation and categorizes them by race, religion, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation. In Illinois, 168 incidents were reported, including one in Wheeling and one in Palatine.

In May, the House passed the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crime Prevention Act of 2007 (H.R. 1592), which I cosponsored. This Act will do much to help local law enforcement agencies respond to violent, hate-based crime. A suburban police department can easily be overwhelmed when hate crimes enter a community.

You can watch my speech at the conference on the You Tube links below.

[Video 1](#)

[Video 2](#)